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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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1. Mideast
2. U.S.-Israel Relations

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Key stories in the media:  
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Major media led with a statement made yesterday by Syrian President Bashar Assad in a meeting with Spanish FM Miguel Moratinos that Israel is pushing the Middle East toward a new war. The media

reported that Assad was responding to DM Ehud Barak's comment on Monday that the stalled peace process with Syria could bode ill for the future of the Middle East and even lead to comprehensive war. Media quoted Syrian FM Walid Muallem as saying that Israelis know that war at this time will come to your cities. The media highlighted PM Benjamin Netanyahu's expression of sorrow over Assad's remarks. HaQaretz quoted Netanyahu as saying on Tuesday during talks with Moratinos that he did not share Moratinos' belief that Syria was ready to leave Iran's orbit. "I have seen no evidence whatsoever of what you are saying," the PM was quoted as saying. This morning leading media reported that FM Avigdor Lieberman, who spoke before a business forum at Bar-Ilan University, warned Assad Qin unprecedented words that should he attack Israel, he stands to lose not only a war but also his grip on Syria. The media cited Lieberman's amazement at the way Syrian leaders responded to DM Barak's moderate statements.

The Jerusalem Post led with a demand by Knesset members to investigate the New Israel Fund (NIF), in the wake of last Friday's article in Maariv that sympathetically cited the NPO Im Tirtzu's allegation that NIF was at the basis of the Goldstone Report's blaming of Israel. (The Knesset decided to set up a special subcommittee to inquire into the matter of contributions to Israeli NGOs from foreign governments and organizations.) NIF President Professor Naomi Chazan was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel Radio that Im Tirtzu is engaged in anti-democratic NIF bashing. The radio also cited the Israeli Arab human rights group Adalah as having become one of the major human rights organizations in the world.

The media quoted PM Netanyahu as saying in his address to the Herzliya conference yesterday: I have reason to hope, realistically, that in the next few weeks we will renew the peace process with the Palestinians, without preconditions. However, Netanyahu's main message to the conference was an emphasis on strengthening Jewish and Zionist education and values.

HaQaretz reported that last week in Washington an Israeli Foreign Ministry delegation met with American officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Michael Posner, and President Barack Obama's adviser on human rights, Samantha Power. The U.S. reportedly suggested to Israel that easing the Gaza blockade would help counter the fallout from the Goldstone Report. In another development, Yediot reported that Judge Richard Goldstone recently told Yale University students that the U.N. is unfair toward Israel.

Maariv revealed that for the past two years an Israeli and a Palestinian team has been discussing the borders of a future Palestinian state at the James A. Baker III Institute for Foreign Policy in Houston. The newspaper reported that the teams have come up with three alternatives.

Leading media reported that yesterday the Jerusalem Municipality announced that Mayor Nir Barkat had agreed to carry out a court order to evacuate and seal Beit Yehonatan, a seven-story Jewish-owned structure built without the proper permits in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan. Nonetheless, in his response to State Attorney Moshe Lador, Barkat made it clear that he was carrying out the order under protest and heavy criticism, and that while the city would act on the matter of Beit Yehonatan, more than 200 Arab-owned homes in Silwan built without the proper permits would be evacuated and demolished as well.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a paper prepared for Chief PA Negotiator Saeb Erekat calls for a one-state solution alternative to the two-state solution. The newspaper cited the hope of senior Fatah official Nabil ShaQath that his trip to Gaza yesterday will spark a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation. This is the first visit by a senior Fatah official since the Hamas takeover of the Strip in 2007.

Israel Radio reported that yesterday Palestinians fired two rockets at Israel. No casualties were reported. The media reported that yesterday another barrel filled with explosives washed ashore on the Palmahim beach south of Rishon Lezion. The police urged the public not to visit the beaches at this time. In other news, media

reported that residents of southern Israel, including Labor Knesset Member and former Defense Minister Amir Peretz, a Sderot resident, are vowing to rise up against the decision not to deploy the Iron Dome missile system.

The media reported that yesterday Iran successfully conducted a ballistic test. Commentators noted that the new missiles could reach targets in Europe or even the U.S.

The media reported that a few hours after making a pro-Zionist speech to the Knesset plenum, Italian PM Silvio likened the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza to that of the Jews during the Holocaust. Berlusconi was talking at a press conference with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah.

Israel Radio reported that an Egyptian court punished two senior Egyptian journalists for holding contacts with Israeli officials. The radio construed that Culture Minister Farouk Hosni instigated those moves.

Over the past few days, several media described the reported plight of Palestinian Christians in Hamas-controlled Gaza.

Israel Hayom reported that the U.S. will build the new QpitQ -- the underground IDF command -- in the Kirya compound in Tel Aviv.

Yediot reported that the Israeli Embassy in Berlin has protested over the characterization of Jaffa as a QPalestinian ghettoQ by the German producers of the film QAjamiQ Q the Israeli contender for best foreign film at the Academy of Motion pictures.

Yediot reported that the City of Beverly Hills will soon name a street after Dr. Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism.

HaQaretz reported that a U.S. grandson of Holocaust survivors has purchased the diary of notorious Auschwitz physician Dr. Joseph Mengele.

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1. Mideast:

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Block Quotes:

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1. QLook for the Iranians

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote on page of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/4): QIsraelQs repeated calls for calm to Syria continue to fall on deaf ears. The Syrians do not believe us.... [Bashar Assad] would remain unconvinced [by tips from Israeli intelligence that Israel has no bellicose plans against Syria].... From remarks [made last week by National Security Advisor James] Jones it can be surmised that the ones inciting the Syrians are the Iranians. Confronted with the American threat, Iran is now posing its own, all too concrete, threat: if you upset us, we can set the entire Middle East on fire. Fanning the flames up north increases as the date of sanctions approaches.... With one hand the Americans are planning to tighten the rope around IranQs neck, and with the other to brace for an Iranian military response. The Iranians are well aware of the American deadline. This is why their responses are becoming more and more extreme. On the one hand they suddenly display moderation, saying that they would be willing to have their uranium enriched in some other country, but at the same time they are making public displays of ballistic missiles and sending threats in every direction. And the Syrians and the Lebanese? They are pawns on IranQs chess board.... There is no real Israeli threat to Syria. The trouble is that in our region virtual tensions -- if not treated carefully -- may become, overnight, all too real.

II. QSyria Now

Senior commentator Ari Shavit wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (2/4): QThere will be no dramatic breakthrough on the Palestinian track in the near future, so a breakthrough on the Syrian track must be initiated. The problem is basically political. Peace with Syria has no party and no leader. And it has no libido. Oddly, the remnants of the Israeli left relate to peace

with Syria like some kind of stepchild. Their passion is for the Palestinians, not the Syrians. The ardent courting is all aimed at the disinterested Palestinians. Even today, Israel is expending most of its peace-seeking energy on a useless effort to cajole the wrong neighbor. The time has come to reset the system and change course. To forestall the evil rising in the east, every effort must be made to enter a dialogue with Syrian President Bashar Assad. To avert a horrendous war, not a stone on the road to Damascus should be left unturned. To offer hope to the Middle East, the prospects held out by the secular regime in Syria must be exhausted. It may be that at the end of the day, the Syrians, too, will turn their backs on us, but every day that goes by without an effort to reach peace with Syria is a day marked by criminal negligence.

### III. QObama Is Weak: and That Is Bad for the Jews

Conservative columnist and former senior IDF officer Yaakov Amidror wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (2/4): QIsrael has many reasons to regret the fact that the U.S. President has been weakened. The fact that he will find it more difficult to enforce his view on the matter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict does not make up for the loss of American ability in other spheres. It may be that even the President realizes the danger of an image of being weak and the report on the deployment of missiles in the Persian Gulf as well as the decision to get weapon sales to Taiwan approved should be seen in this light. These two events were reported as a signal to all those rejoicing in his weakness in the world. Will the White House also want to signal, in the Palestinian matter too, that it should be taken into consideration more than its weakness? Time will tell.

### IV. QShalit Is Disappearing

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (2/4): QIt seems the Prime Minister is being motivated by considerations of honor, which he fears will be decimated if he accedes to all of Hamas' demands. Netanyahu is still a prisoner of his former opposition to freeing any terrorist, as well as of the fear that he will be held responsible for any future terror attacks. Honor is indeed a fundamental consideration in any act of state. But the Shalit deal is not an Qact of stateQ -- it is a humanitarian necessity. Failing to carry it out will actually undermine the state's honor in the eyes of its citizens. Moreover, when Netanyahu places the ball in Hamas' court, he is eradicating the last vestiges of his own honor. After all, he conducted negotiations with Hamas and made huge concessions to the organization. But in the end he could not find the courage to complete the deal. Shalit must not be allowed to disappear into a mist of empty verbiage. This soldier, who has already been in captivity for three and a half years, cannot serve as a living monument to Israel's national pride. The price of such an Qimage victoryQ over Hamas is liable to prove higher than we can bear.

### IV. QDaydreaming

Dr. Matti Steinberg, who served as has adviser to two heads of Shin Bet, wrote in HaQaretz (2/4): Q[In a HaQaretz article last month, former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Meron] Benvenisti saw the QFuture VisionQ document formulated by prominent Israeli Arab intellectuals as an exemplary expression of Qparity of esteem,Q but in fact what they advocate is neutralizing the Jewish nation's capability of self-determination in a binational state. They would achieve this by demanding a veto right over any government decision affecting the Arab population -- in other words over everything, because all decisions affect them. When I pointed this out at an academic conference and explained that the document would ultimately lead to mono-national Arab-Palestinian rule, an Arab Israeli academic told me in private that they were demanding a veto right to protect me, as an Israeli Jew, when I become part of a national minority in a single state. It's a pity that this academic, an advocate of a binational state, did not summon up the courage to say this openly in public. It's an even greater pity that Benvenisti wishes, probably unconsciously, to draw us either consciously or unconsciously into this booby trap.

### VI. QGive Responsibility back to Jordan

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in Yediot Aharonot (2/4): QIsrael

did Jordan a favor in 1967, when it severed it from the troubles of the Palestinians in the West Bank, just as it did Egypt a favor when it severed it from Gaza. This Israeli stupidity has to end, and right away. The Jordanians, of course, are alarmed by the possibility of having to handle Palestinian affairs, just as the Egyptians became alarmed and did everything so that Israel not leave Philadelphia Road -- but there is no evading this. The tiny Palestinian state will not be viable unless it has a direct and clear connection to Jordan, where already there is a solid Palestinian majority, and the crown prince himself is half Palestinian. How can Israel go about this? By opening the Allenby crossing to a direct Jordanian-Palestinian connection, without Israeli involvement.... The time has come for Israel to stop doing the dirty work for the Jordanians, just as it has stopped doing it for the Egyptians.

#### VII. QWar Stories Our Daughters WonQt Tell Us

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (2/4): QI think everyone knows why the soldiers who talk to Breaking the Silence [the NGO which collects mostly anonymous testimony from soldiers serving in the territories] remain anonymous: because if their identities were known, theyQd be pariahs in this society -- Goldstones on a smaller scale.... We can go on brutalizing the Palestinians. Inadvertently, we can go on brutalizing our daughters and sons, too. We just canQt do it in silence -- which is what gives me hope.

#### VIII. QSilvio Caesar

Columnist Nadav Eyal wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (2/4): QOur politicians bestowed an emperorQs honor on Berlusconi and did just about everything short of flinging roses at his feet, but such disappointment: just as the Italian Prime Minister crossed the Green Line yesterday, he sided with the Palestinians -- and even with comparisons made between Gaza and the Holocaust. Roman pragmatism, you see. Most of the time Berlusconi is a friend to Israel, however such a fact fails to change other facts, some of which even more important. The first of these is, of course, the problematic character of Berlusconi himself.... The world really doesnQt tolerate him; his political and financial accomplishments are mediocre at best, but the people love him. Our politicians gaze at Berlusconi and are certainly jealous; Silvio is their role model.

#### 12. U.S.-Israel Relations:

##### Block Quotes:

#### QObama's Lobbying Law of Unintended Consequences

Washington-based columnist Douglas Bloomfield wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (2/4): QU.S. President Barack ObamaQs call for tightening restrictions on lobbying could have an unintended impact on Jewish organizations and other nonprofit groups working on behalf of a wide range of public interest causes, including the elderly, the poor, the environment and the hungry. The proposals in ObamaQs State of the Union address to Qrequire lobbyists to disclose each contactQ with Congress or the administration on behalf of a client will create an avalanche of paperwork for the small groups that can least afford it. More useful would be more detailed reporting by public officials -- and spouses -- of their sources of funding and assets.... The politics of disclosure could discourage volunteers from working for charitable causes if they fear theyQll be attacked by the incumbentQs political opponents as influence peddlers engaging in questionable activity, which is the way the President made lobbying sound. The key to the success of public-interest advocacy is a

well-informed, motivated grassroots network of citizen lobbyists.  
Turning them into targets for gotcha politics is unhealthy for our  
democracy.

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